

# It Could be More Than Just a Cough!

## Know the signs and symptoms of pertussis

- Pertussis disease in young children can cause severe coughing spells, typically followed by a high-pitched “whoop”, making it difficult to eat, drink, sleep or even breathe
- Adolescents often do not exhibit the classic “whoop” that is associated with the disease
- In fact, adolescent signs and symptoms are often similar to the common cold and include a mild fever, runny nose and a severe cough
- These coughing episodes associated with pertussis disease can lead to vomiting, a hernia, or even broken ribs

## Be educated about vaccinations

- Pertussis vaccine should be given in combination with diphtheria and tetanus (DTaP) in five doses at 2, 4, 6, and 15 to 18 months of age and again at four to six years of age
- Because immunity to pertussis (and tetanus, diphtheria) wanes over time, pre-teens and adolescents may be unprotected against these diseases
- Recently, a new pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap) was recommended for pre-teens and adolescents
- Make sure all 11-12 year olds receive a Tdap booster in place of a Td booster
- If adolescents, 13 years and older, did not receive this booster dose, catch them up as soon as possible

## Keep a Record of all Vaccinations

- To make sure any child or adolescent is fully protected, you must keep a record of all previous vaccinations and share this with your doctor and other health care providers

## How Pertussis is Contracted

- Pertussis is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- Pertussis has no distinct seasonal pattern, but may increase in the summer and fall

## Be Aware of Who is at Risk

- Adolescents become susceptible when immunity wanes (5-10 years after their last DTaP vaccination administered at four-six years old)
- Infants under 12 months of age and those who have not completed the primary vaccination series of DTaP are at highest risk for severe illness
- Pertussis is highly contagious and outbreaks can spread quickly through communities, especially among teenagers who tend to cluster together in social, athletic and academic settings

## Make Routine Visits to Your Healthcare Provider

- It is important for adolescents to have routine visits to ensure they receive **all** needed vaccines and therefore are protecting themselves from a lot of diseases

## Take Action Immediately

- If you or a family member are experiencing severe coughing spells for a week or longer, contact your health care provider immediately

Adapted from the Society for Adolescent Medicine